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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KABUL 005651

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DEPT FOR SCA/FO DAS GASTRIGHT, SCA/A
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG
NSC FOR AHARRIMAN
OSD FOR KIMMIT
CENTCOM FOR CG CFC-A. CG CJTF-76 POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/19/2016

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SUBJECT: PRT MEHTARLAM - ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT IN LAGHMAN
REVEALS POLITICAL PANDORA'S BOX

Classified By: CLASSIFIED BY DCM RICHARD NORLAND FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

SUMMARY

11. (U) In the aftermath of the (second) attempted assassination of Laghman Governor Gulab Mangal, on October 14, 2006, various theories have emerged to explain the attack. These include: a Taliban attempt to destabilize the government; a local power broker's attempt to maintain political influence; and the government being caught in the crossfire between two rival provincial leaders. The attack highlighted the dangers faced by government officials who attempt to assert authority in a politically charged locale, and underlines the need for complementary development of security, rule of law, and local governance. End Summary.

THREE POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS FOR THE ATTACK

12. (U) During the assassination attempt on Governor Mangal, another provincial government official, Engineer Rohullah, was shot in the forehead while standing between the governor and deputy governor and died instantly. Investigators at the time detained six Afghan National Police (ANP) and 15 civilians for investigation, but thus far no one has been indicted. Numerous explanations have been offered for the attack:

13. (C) Version one, suggested by the National Directorate of Security (NDS), points to a Taliban-arranged assassination by a single individual who managed to leave a remote-controlled bomb during daylight hours in a ditch five meters from an Afghan National Police (ANP) manned guard post at the provincial government building. About eight minutes

after the explosion, while controlling the resulting crowd, one of the governor's bodyguards supposedly triggered an accidental discharge which struck the victim. (Note: Local sources have also told the PRT that NDS operatives are spreading rumors that the ANP is responsible for the assassination attempt. End note.)

14. (C) In version two, high ranking provincial ANP believe that the attack was arranged by four individuals whose replacements were requested by the governor. These individuals include the ANP Directors of Traffic and Narcotics and the NDS Directors in both Alishang and Qarghayi.

15. (C) In version three - offered by Governor Mangal himself - he is caught in the political cross-fire and longstanding rivalry between Dr. Abdullah (the Deputy Director of the NDS in Kabul) and Engineer Mohammad Alim Qarar (a Laghman representative to the Wolesi Jirga). Abdullah and Qarar have long conspired against one another to maintain influence in Laghman, and both have an extensive network of close allies positioned throughout local government in Laghman. Mangal has complained that any action on his part is seen by either Qarar or Abdullah as a move in favor of the other. Examples of actions perceived to be against Abdullah and in favor of Qarar include: (1) the recent appointment of Mohammad Rahim, Qarar's brother, as the mayor of Mehtarlam; (2) Mangal's decision to remove two NDS district chiefs, one of whom was Dr. Abdullah's former bodyguard; and (3) the arrest of Haji Naqibullah - a close ally of Abdullah - for the alleged attempted murder of Haji Hazrat Ali,

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who Naqibullah believed had a hand in the death of his brother, Estamullah Muhabat, last December. Governor Mangal, therefore, believes that the assassination attempt against him may have been masterminded by Abdullah, based on the appearance of growing ties between Governor Mangal and Qarar.

ABDULLAH'S DESTABILIZING INFLUENCE IN LAGHMAN PROVINCE

16. (C) Version three in particular underscores accounts previously heard by the PRT that NDS deputy Dr. Abdullah maintains an overbearing influence in Laghman politics, even while working in Kabul. Senior provincial officials have described the NDS apparatus in Laghman as a "private" organization controlled by Abdullah from Kabul. The NDS chief in Alishang District has allegedly searched houses without a warrant, sold drugs confiscated in raids, and sent the proceeds to Dr. Abdullah. Former governor Shah Mohammad Safi also complained about the intentionally destabilizing influence of Dr. Abdullah (most notably during the riots that followed Esmatullah Muhabat's murder last December.)

PRT ACTION

17. (SBU) Given the recent spate of attacks on provincial governors and information indicating a marked increase in the use of suicide bombers in Afghanistan, the PRT has instituted training for ANP and NDS personnel involved in protecting the governor. Such courses are a simple method of increasing his odds of survival, thereby enhancing the perception of overall security in the province.

NEUMANN